



ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS IN BALANGA CITY

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Abstract

The province of Bataan is rich in history, culture and tradition. From the Spanish colonial period culminating to the Japanese – American war, Bataan has been a benchmark of important historical events that occurred in the past. These events were witnessed not just by the locals but the buildings that exists during that era. However, as time passed, as modernity and technology rise, these buildings were slowly being neglected. In order to further knowledge and awareness to heritage sites and structures in the locality, the group of architects on the academe aims to assess three (3) heritage buildings within the center of Bataan, the Capitol Compound in Balanga City namely The Bataan Capitol (1), the Bataan Library (2) and the Bataan Hall of Justice (3).

This research is specifically conducted to further understand the importance of built heritage particularly in the province of Bataan, its promotion to raise consciousness and its worth to the community, and to provide a strategical solution on how to take care of the heritage buildings, all for the benefit of future generations.

Keywords: Heritage, Conservation, Architecture, Value, Balanga City, Old Buildings, Bataan, Capitol

1. Introduction

Bataan is a diplomatic province rich in culture, heritage and tradition bound with its rich history. These were taken credit by thru various historical event witnessed by the heritage buildings and structures-built decades and some were centuries ago. These buildings stand the test of time and have significant influence to its community. Particularly in Balanga City which is the center of the province, number of historical happenings were documented. Some of the heritage buildings that still exists today are the Cathedral of Balanga, the Bataan Library, the Provincial Capitol and the Hall of Justice.

Today, Bataan is slowly progressing its economy due to booming business prospects leading to vast construction of modern building of which may have a positive impact among the locals due to job opportunities it can create and the economical aspect of the province generating vast revenues. However, the province's heritage aspect may somehow be neglected. As per saying, history dictates what it is today. It is evident that some of the heritage structures in the province are slowly deteriorating while some are unused. Without these heritage structures to represent important events from the past, the future generation will no longer see and appreciate what has been.

As seen in other countries which are rich in cultural heritage namely the Taj Mahal of India, shrines and temples in China, Thailand and Japan and others continues to preserve their heritage buildings which acts as the face of their country and its tourism. With the help of some intergovernmental organizations that exist today, namely the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, where the mission is to provide best tools, skills, knowledge in preserving cultural heritage in all of its form.

There were numbers of peer reviewed researches and published books of heritage buildings all around the country yet in Bataan seems to have a few. This research proposal aims to assess selected heritage structures in Balanga City that needs urgent attention. This action is in line with the primary law governing heritage conservation in the Philippines, RA 10066, also known as the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, later amended by RA 11961, which aim to protect, conserve, and promoted the nation's cultural heritage, including its tangible and intangible assets.

As per initial assessment, the researchers have selected Balanga city as its starting point, narrowing it down to the very center of the province, the Balanga City Capitol Compound. It is located in Barangay San Jose where various government and educational establishments stand. Within the compound, the proponents have selected the three most valuable heritage structures namely:



Figure 1. The Bataan Capitol, Bataan Library and Bataan Justice Hall

1. Bataan Capitol
2. Bataan Library
3. Justice Hall

to be investigated through activities such as site visits, investigation of its current condition particularly architectural and engineering aspects of the building as well as to come up with suggestion on how to properly take care of the city' s heritage facilities. The result of this research shall contribute in strengthening the heritage values of the province as it lacks at the moment, further its importance in lieu of boosting Bataan tourism.

Objectives of the Study

The study focuses on the assessment of three heritage buildings inside the Balanga City capitol compound namely the Bataan Capitol, Bataan Library and Justice Hall where the proponents sought to answer the following

1. What are the historical data of the buildings?
2. How do the respondents assess the heritage buildings according to
 - 2.1 Design
 - 2.2 Usability
 - 2.3 Value
3. What are the possible actions for the improvement of the heritage buildings?

Conceptual / Theoretical Framework of the Study

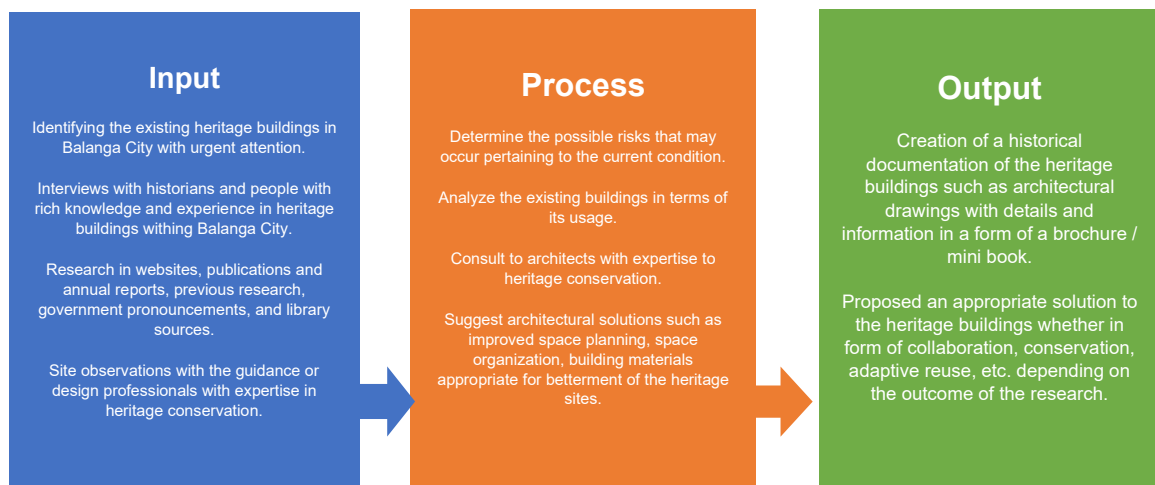


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

2. Methods

Research Design / Test Procedures

The proponents have used descriptive and qualitative method of research. In descriptive research will focus in gathering data about the characteristics of the research subject, which included observation, case studies and interviews while in qualitative research, the proponents have assessed the condition of the heritage building in Balanga City, Bataan as well as document the historical details that each structure holds.

The researchers collected and treated data exclusively from **primary** and **secondary sources**. Primary sources include interviews with historians and people with rich knowledge and experience in heritage buildings within Balanga City. Site observations were conducted with the guidance of design professionals with expertise in heritage conservation.

The study will also collect and treated data exclusively from secondary sources including, but not limited to websites, publications and annual reports, previous research, government pronouncements, and library sources.

After the data gathering, content analysis was used. Content analysis is the analysis of what is contained in a written, verbal, or visual message in a manner that will allow the researchers to make inferences about the characteristics and meaning of written and other recorded material. In the context of this study, several documents from different sources and transcripts of interviews will be examined to see what themes emerge, what issues or concerns are the most prevalent, and how these themes are interrelated.

Through a detailed analysis of historical data, rich information can be exposed and can be gathered to supplement existing historical data. Accumulated data from site observations will lead to details on structural issues and provide a model on how to maintain qualified heritage buildings within the city.

Population

This study requires involvement from locals and government sectors. For the locals include caretakers, users and bystanders of the heritage building to be selected as well as the design professionals with expertise in heritage conservation. Among the government sector may include the provincial tourism of Bataan and the heritage department of the province which will ensure vital information regarding the subject matter.

Study Locale

The target sites of the proponent to be studied are some of the heritage sites in Balanga city, particularly the Bataan Capitol, Bataan Library and the Justice Hall located in Capitol Compound, Balanga City, Bataan. Other sites to consider are the Bulwagan / Malasakit Center and the demolished Bataan Provincial Hospital Building.

Sample Size

Since the study will proceed in qualitative design, the participants for the interviews will be purposively selected and will vary based on the set inclusion criteria. For the objective of documenting the historical data held by the heritage buildings in Balanga City historians and people with rich knowledge and experience in heritage buildings within Balanga City will be included. For assessing if the heritage building qualifies for reuse or demolition and its possible function architects and engineers with expertise in heritage conservation will be included.

Instrumentation / Data Collection Tools

Researchers collected historical information pertaining to the selected heritage buildings to be studied. Information including when the buildings were built, its original purpose and important persons involved during the creation of the buildings.

Part of the research as well are interviews with historians and people with rich knowledge and experience in heritage buildings to document important historical data. Questions such as current status of the heritage buildings, their historical knowledge, their suggested strategies, possible improvements and personal opinions concerning the subject matter will all be asked during the interviews.

Researchers have approached architects and engineers with expertise in heritage building and will ask questions such as structural integrity of the buildings, the possible

strategies in retaining or reusing the facilities, what are potential plans to improve the facilities and such.

Statistical and Data Analysis Plan

The proponents conducted various activities to prove the research feasibility starting with determining the potential heritage buildings within the city from the Bataan Tourism Office and Heritage Department of provincial government of Bataan. Priority is those who are in jeopardy of being demolished or renovated. To followed by on site visitation and observation. They conducted interviews to prospect people and personal interviews with expertise in heritage conservation. Lastly, compose a summary of activities and propose recommendations to further the project.

3. Results and Discussion

According to the facts, information, data and evidences collected in this research, it has been realized that the Bataan Capitol, Bataan Library and the Hall of Justice is currently facing dilapidation due to negligence of its value, usage and importance to the province's history.

It is obvious that the three (3) heritage sites have common problems that needs to be address with. One of which are its current condition as seen on the damages in and outside of these buildings. This is due to environmental factors such as typhoon, earthquakes, even exposure to everyday dirt from passing vehicles, not to mention the day-to-day usage of its occupants and visitors. Other factor is due to lack of funding of the government for its rehabilitation or at least, conducting yearly maintenance checks to help maintain the integrity of this structure. Due to these, the risks that may possibly occur in the future is slowly progressing. These risks contain further damages, unforeseen accidents and such may affect not only the image of the province but most importantly the safety of its users / occupants.

Furthermore, due to the circumstance brought by the pandemic, the original usability of these buildings particularly the Capitol and Library has been long gone and have experienced immediate change without proper consultation to expertise in heritage conservation, resulting to somehow a negative image of the building and loss of its heritage value. These repurposing efforts may have continued the usage of the buildings, however loses its original value, purpose and design. Per say, in the Bataan library, the new spaces were inputted based from the needs of its new users however it does not fit the resources the building had. Evidently so, there were no efforts in preserving the heritage value during these adaptation efforts due to the exterior facades of the building remains underdeveloped.

Lastly, due to the construction of modern buildings around the capitol compound such as The Bunker, the FISHDA Convention Center, and current improvement of the façade of the Bataan People Center, the remaining heritage sites is somehow being undervalued and may soon result to its total gentrification.

If these continue, there will no longer be heritage sites that the province can be proud to showcase to the entire country and foreign guests / dignitaries. These buildings are the testament of Bataan's rich history which can be passed on to the next generations. Without these heritage sites, the future of our beloved province maybe uncertain.

Through the collection of facts, data and information of this research, the proponents have created 3-dimensional drawings of the three heritage buildings namely the Bataan Capitol, Bataan Library and Bataan Hall of Justice to achieve a nostalgic feel, to see the original built of the heritage buildings back in its heyday.

To help promote the heritage sites studied in this research, the proponents have created a four (4) page brochure entitled "Bataan Heritage - Architectural Illustrations of Heritage Buildings in Balanga City" containing relative information about the heritage structures. To gain interest of readers young or of age, the proponents have decided to do the illustrations of the buildings in an artistic manner personally drawn / painted by the research leader Ar. Yves Jan Atienza.

Other than being one of the outputs of this research, the proponents aim to disseminate the brochures to local government sectors such as the Bataan Tourism Office or to the Heritage and Cultural Division of the province as token and maybe jumpstart of collaboration in the promotion of these heritage buildings. This brochure may also be distributed to elementary, high school and tertiary students particularly those who are studying BS Architecture from BPSU or Bataan Heroes College, to help boost their interest in history and culture of their locality.

Furthermore, once the contents have been established, the proponents aim to create a full coffee-table book containing other heritage sites that has not been studied in this research. These include buildings and areas outside Balanga city in the form of religious structures, shrines and such.



Figure 3. Actual Bataan Heritage Buildings brochure

Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, its conclusion and the corresponding recommendations. In line with the assessment of heritage buildings in Balanga City particularly the Bataan Capitol, Bataan Library and the Hall of Justice, the proponents have come up with significant conclusions pertaining to the following

1. Assessment of Historical Data of the Buildings

In terms of the historical data of the buildings, the proponent has collected information to clearly understand the importance of built heritage, the information contains historical timeline of planning and construction of the buildings, purpose of the buildings, people involve including public servants, architects, departments, private groups and such. Other evidences collected are old photos and architectural drawings which furthers the understanding of the research.

2. Assessment of Heritage Buildings

2.1 In accordance with the *design*, referring to the collected data, there is a significant design that is common with the three (3) heritage buildings, all of which are designed through Brutalism Style, it is an architectural style that emerged during the 20th century modern architecture era which precisely showcases and exposed concrete skin to its exterior façade also known as Beton Brut (naked concrete). This style expresses massive forms, bareness to its exterior surfaces with no architectural finish like painting or cladding exists. The buildings also have influence of Neoclassicism style due to its symmetrical layout, the use of massive columns and parapets. All building were designed with high ceilings, large open spaces like atrium or a quadrangle which promotes natural lighting and ventilation.

2.2 In accordance with the usability, it is evident that the buildings were built in accordance to its original purpose. However, due to the impact brought by the Covid 19 pandemic, two of the three heritage buildings were repurposed to accommodate the needs of the provincial government. The Bataan Capitol was converted to the Provincial Health Office and employees were transferred to the newly built “The Bunker” while the Bataan Library was converted to temporary TESDA office while their new office is being built elsewhere. The hall of justice however stays to its original purpose yet postponed its operation during the pandemic hit.

2.3 In terms with the *value*, to really understand the importance of the heritage sites being studied, the proponents aim to look up the current status/ condition of the three buildings. It is concluded that the buildings are slowly deteriorating due to lack of maintenance work seen on the reparations from in and out of the facilities. Some of which undergone immediate renovation works to accommodate provincial needs without properly consulting heritage experts. In relation, the

proponents also conducted relevant interviews to people involved with the heritage sites including provincial government office heads, design professionals, students and such which all shared significant opinions to improve built heritage of the province.

3. Actions for Improvement of the Heritage Buildings

In terms of actions for the improvement of the heritage building in Balanga city, the proponents have summarized the assessment results of the research discussing the total condition of the buildings explaining the importance to today and future generations. As per collected data, the proponents also created 3D digital drawings to interpret its original built form and to have nostalgic impressions. Lastly, the proponents have created a promotional brochure entitled “Bataan Heritage – Architectural Illustrations of Heritage Buildings in Balanga City” to further endorse the built heritage of the province.

Recommendations

Based on the facts gathered in this research, the proponents have come up with recommendations for the improvement of the heritage buildings.

- The Bataan Provincial Government is encouraged for a close coordination with its subordinate s and local government sectors namely the Bataan Cultural and Heritage Division, Provincial Engineering Office, Bataan Tourism Department together with the BPSU architecture department in crafting of Conservation Management Plan (CMP).
- Consultation with local professional organizations with knowledge of heritage conservation such as the United Architects of the Philippines – Balanga Bataan Chapter and Bataan Peninsulares Chapter, Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers – Bataan Chapter, Institute of Integrated Electrical Engineers of the Philippines Inc, other professional organization that may be helpful to the project, and those professionals who are currently taking masters or doctorate degrees in relation to heritage conservation.
- Once the government and local sectors have conducted a conducive plan for heritage site in the province, it is suggested formulate of local ordinance to help increase consciousness and care to the value of the said heritage buildings.
- Design professionals in coordination with heritage conservation groups in and outside of Bataan should pursuit the creation of design strategies / proposals for the betterment and future usage of the heritage sites, in correspondence to the plans of Bataan Provincial Government. Consider the heritage buildings for adaptive reuse by converting the usage of the old buildings to a use comparable to importance of its historical value, such as a museum or a cultural center.

- Creation of promotional materials to raise heritage and cultural awareness. These promotional materials can be used by the tourism office of Bataan or can be disseminated to primary, secondary and tertiary schools for information purposes, in a form of visuals arts, digital arts or 3D printed figures such as desk display, keychains etc. These may include feedbacks from the local community, visitors, school faculty and students etc. in resonance of its educational content and its effectivity.
- Engage in promotional activities together with local volunteer groups, local cultural and heritage experts and such to spread awareness of the heritage sites to the general public through guided tours, art activities and competitions, outreach programs etc. They may be headed by the heritage sector of the local government side by side with historians who are familiar with the stories of the aforementioned heritage buildings.
- In case of restoration of the heritage buildings occur, it is important that the local government plan a regular monitoring and maintenance work, including periodic assessments and sustainable funding mechanisms to enhance the feasibility of the proposed solutions.
- In case of redevelopment of the heritage buildings occur, it is suggested to implement modern technology to the buildings to attract more visitors, technology such as AI or digital monitors, screens or interactive displays. These displays shall be placed along common halls of the building for visitors to access. It can be designed / decorated with stands or frames in integration with the original classical / brutalist style of the aforementioned buildings.
- It is suggested for the continuation of this research to other heritage sites in Bataan other than the selected sites, including religious structures, shrines, landmarks and such. Religious buildings may include the old churches within the province such as the Balanga Cathedral, Pilar church, Abucay church, Orani church, Samal church, Orion church, Bagac church, Morong church, Hermosa church, Dinalupihan church. It may also be other notable landmarks like the Dambana ng Kagitingan in Mt. Samat, the Friendship Tower in Bagac, Bataan, the Flamming Sword in Pilar, Bataan, not to mention the numerous Death March Markers scattered around the province. In consideration, old private residential houses with important events or prominent person involve can be included.
- As per saying of history dictates the future, this study of preservation of cultural heritage in Balanga city contributes to broader innovation and sustainability goals through learnings of specific building materials used that lasts for centuries which can be applicable in today's building construction methods. Furthermore, conservation of heritage buildings in Balanga city attains sustainability by retaining the original built and not relying on modern materials full of carbon footprints.
- It is suggested to this study that the local government can refer on international standards of heritage conservation. Per say, provisions from International Centre for

the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) can be helpful in term of conservation methods, budgetary strategies and application of innovative techniques in preservation.

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